

THE BAPTIST

# Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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## Witness shines through Ukraine unrest

KIEV, Ukraine (BP and local reports) — Amid Ukraine's political turmoil, the people of God have been conveying His peace, according to reports by a Baptist worker and a charismatic pastor in Kiev.

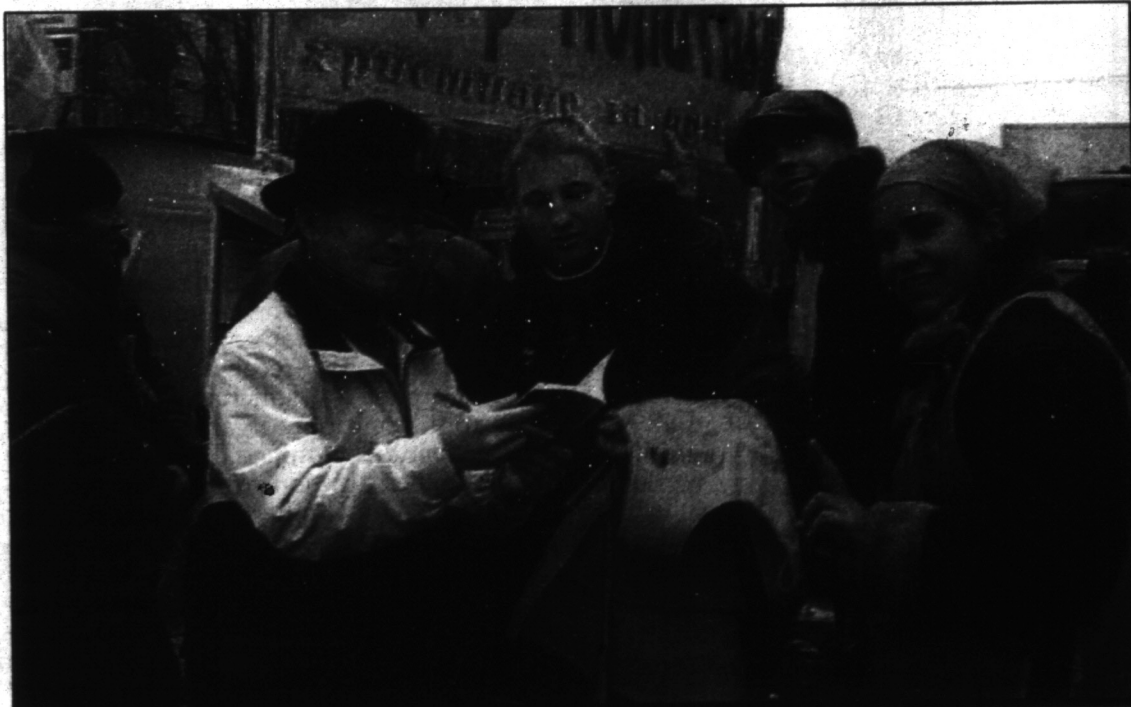
In an e-mail newsletter Dec. 15, Duck-Woo Nam, a Southern Baptist missionary in Kiev, described visiting the protestors' "tent city" in the Ukrainian capital's Independence Square on a day when believers had gathered to pray and had "claimed the promise that 'God will heal the nation' (2 Chronicles 7:14)."

"Another day we went out two by two and shared the Good News there," Nam continued. "Since we were Asian, many people approached us with several requests: to have pictures taken together, to write some Korean on their posters and for interviews. We distributed many evangelism tracts and several New Testaments. A young man asked me to sign and give the Bible to his believing mother. On the posters, we wrote, 'glory to Ukraine, glory to God.'"

Mississippi Baptists recently celebrated a six-year partnership/missions mobilization project with Ukrainian Baptists, with a banquet to mark the close of the partnership.

According to Sunday Adelaja, pastor of the 26,000-member charismatic Kiev congregation named Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations, "Every day there are thousands of people uniting together — including Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox — in the streets, Independence Square and in front of the Parliament and other government buildings to make their voices heard."

"On the main stage in Independence Square, denominational officials lead the crowds in four hours of prayer from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. before the politicians speak and from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. each evening to close out the day," Adelaja said, according to a news release distributed by a prominent evangelical media relations firm, A. Larry Ross & Associates in Dallas.



**WITNESS WORKING** — Southern Baptist missionary Duck-Woo Nam (second from left) writes a note of encouragement in a New Testament as part of his witness for Christ during the gathering of thousands of election protestors in Kiev, Ukraine, in early December. The Nam family used this occasion, marked by the pursuit of democracy, to share with the crowds about the freedom found in Christ. (BP photo)

**PARTNERSHIP'S CLOSE** — Grigoriy Kommendant (right), president of the Ukrainian Baptist Union, receives a plaque from Jim Futral (left) executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, celebrating the six-year partnership between Mississippi Baptists and Ukraine. Joining them is Vladimir Shemchishen, president of Odessa Theological Seminary in Ukraine, and pastor of Illichovsk Church. (BR photo by Tony Martin)



Adelaja made his comments during a Global Pastors Network meeting of about 50 church leaders who met Dec. 7-8 in Orlando, Fla. The network, of which the late Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ was a co-founder, is working to distribute Christian training resources in multiple languages via the Internet to pastors around the world.

Adelaja's church has been actively involved in caring for demonstrators who have been braving the cold and snow. Every night, the pastor said, they take in 1,000 people to provide food, clothing, medical attention and a warm bed. After those individuals leave the next morning to continue their vigils, another 1,000 rotate in that evening.

"One of the army generals told me his secret agents who infiltrate the crowds report back to headquarters that these demonstrations are like a revival meeting," Adelaja said. "For several weeks, millions of people have gathered in the streets, but because of the influence of Christian leaders and the church, they just sing songs. Most significant is the fact that no shops have been vandalized and no one is drinking — not even a beer — which is unheard of among any crowd to gather in an Eastern European nation."

A runoff election is scheduled for Dec. 26 between Russian-supported Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich and the West-leaning opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko. The prime minister won a Nov. 21 vote, but the results were eventually annulled by Ukraine's Supreme Court after pro-Yushchenko protestors amassed, clad in the movement's signature orange, many bearing statues of the Virgin Mary, to contend that the election had been rigged in favor of the current government.

Nam, the Southern Baptist missionary, who attends a congregation named Revival Church, urged prayer that, "The Lord intervenes in the political history of Ukraine in order to open a new world. People want to have a president who is not greedy for power and money, but is honest, wise and compassionate."

Adelaja, meanwhile, said, "I believe this is a critical moment for the future and destiny of the Ukrainian people. Twelve years ago we were freed from communism. Though we have had a different government with different uniforms since, the same corrupt people have remained in power. Now, Ukraine has its first opportunity to choose our own free way of life."

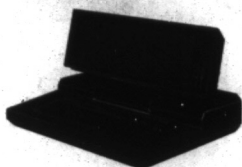
According to Adelaja, Russian President Vladimir Putin has said on national Ukrainian television that only "over my dead body" will there be a country bordering Russia that is pro-Western. The Russian president further criticized the current government for not doing more about reducing the rights of Christians and churches, whom he referred to as "sects."

"We need the prayers and support of Christians in America to engage the diplomatic process to influence and make clear to the Ukrainian government that the people have a right to elect whomever they want to lead our nation," Adelaja said. "It is also important for the media to not stop talking about Ukraine. As the whole world watches this situation unfold, the pressure will only continue to build for the government to do the right thing."

Mission Network News, meanwhile, quoted Paul Marty, president of HOPE International and a resident of Ukraine, as predicting the future of Christianity in the former Soviet Union is at stake in the election.



## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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# Erasing Christmas from Christmas

For the past 2,000 years, Christmas has been a special occasion for Christians. The sheer obviousness of that statement would lead some believers to argue that it doesn't even need to be said. Those folks would be wrong.

The true meaning of Christmas is under attack in America as never before. There are people, groups, and companies that would like nothing more than to see Christ wiped from Christmas. Don't believe it? Consider:

- Macy's Department Stores recently released a statement that said, "As America's department store, Macy's is representative of America, embracing all cultures and peoples. To be more inclusive and speak to all of our customers, we use phrases such as 'Season's Greetings' and 'Happy Holidays,' in addition to 'Merry Christmas.'"

It would be interesting to know the ratio of usage of "Season's Greetings" to "Merry Christmas" in Macy's stores.

- Target Stores issued a statement explaining their decision to deny permission to Christian-based Salvation Army to place their bell-ringers and kettles on store property during this Christmas season: "We receive an increasing number of solicitation inquiries from nonprofit organizations each year and determined that if we continue to allow the Salvation Army to solicit, then it opens the door to other groups that wish to solicit our guests."

Because of Target's decision, the Salvation Army expects donations to drop by about nine million dollars this year alone.

- The Plano (Texas) Independent School District has directed that students and teachers will not be allowed to write "Merry Christmas" on greeting cards to U.S. soldiers serving overseas. Students and teachers will also not be allowed to exchange candy canes, pencils, or other items with religious messages — a policy that also applies to all parents involved in school activities.

- Pasco County (Florida) officials removed all Christmas trees from public property after the county attorney warned that the trees were religious symbols.

- Blair (Kansas) High School prohibited any mention of Christmas in a classroom door decorating contest. School



**UNASHAMED** — Not all countries of the world share the fear America exhibits toward including Christ in Christmas. Choir members from Lakeside Church, Birmingham (above) perform their musical extravaganza, *Laura's Christmas*, at the National Theater in Guatemala City. The public performance, all sung and spoken in Spanish, tells the story of Christ. There was no backlash from the use of the Guatemalan public facility. (BP photo courtesy of Lakeside Church, Birmingham)

officials ordered student contestants to use winter themes instead.

- The music director for public schools in Maplewood, N.J., has excised all religious references from holiday choral concerts, in an effort not to offend non-Christians.

- The Wichita (Kansas) Eagle newspaper ran a correction and apology for referring to the area's Community Tree as a "Christmas Tree."

- The mayor of Somerville, Mass., quickly retracted a news release he distributed that described a City Holiday Party as a "Christmas Party."

The list goes on and on, almost without end. Why is it so important that Christmas be erased from Christmas?

The answer is simple, really. In the ongoing campaign to remove any mention on Christianity from public discourse, it is imperative that Christmas be converted

into a secular "holiday season." If Christmas remains Christmas, there is at least tacit acknowledgement that the Word of God is true, that Christ is indeed who He said He is, that He was born of a virgin, lived a sin-free life, died for our sins, and then defeated death to sit at the right hand of the Father as our Lord and Savior.

Secularists, intent on living their self-centered lives with no spiritual anchors or moral constraints, cannot countenance such an idea. It goes against their strongly-held notions of the world and how they should conduct themselves in that world.

Christians have fought this battle for 2,000 years now, against violent tyrants and cocky intellectuals alike. Through it all, God has remained on His throne and drawn people to Him through His son Jesus Christ.

All the hollow "Happy Holidays" greetings in the world won't change that.

## GUEST OPINION:



### Embracing the New Year

By Tony Martin, Associate Editor

In many ways, 2004 was *Iannus horribilis* around our house. Not to bore you with any whining — we all have our issues, right? — but something about having a U.S. Marine son in Fallujah, Iraq, tends to weigh heavily on one's psyche. When we heard that one of his best friends was killed by a sniper while they were on patrol together, well, that gets my attention. Because of that, other issues — family, health, and not least, having a teenage daughter/cheerleader who is a senior in high school and all that implies — tended to be magnified. ("Waaaaah," said all the collective Baptist Record readers.) On top of all that, we have a Boston terrorist that seems to forget some days that he's housebroken.

At my ancient stage of life (or so believes my daughter), I've come to realize that you can have good days, bad days; good weeks, bad weeks; and, indeed, good years and bad years. So what will 2005 hold? Will our families stay intact and healthy? What will happen in the Middle East? Will a

"dirty bomb" be detonated in Wichita? What about Social Security? Will we keep our jobs, or will we all be reduced to eating cat food straight from the can?

Take a deep breath, because I'm about to share a prophetic utterance:

*It's going to be OK.*

We are so prone as Christians to look at ourselves, our circumstances, our position in life, and evaluate what is happening by our worldview. Whether we mean to or not, we do those calculations and leave God completely out of the equation. We look at 2005 with trepidation, because

we see the state of the world and believe that it is dark and demonic with very little light.

Might I suggest, with an eye toward history, that things have been dark before? I look at the Cuban missile crisis, when we were a red button away from nuclear winter. Or World War II, when the Axis powers were claiming great swaths of land and Hitler wanted nothing less than a worldwide Third Reich. Or, what about the paroxysm of our own American Civil War, when our country was riven into two unspeakably hostile entities with what seemed like very little hope of reconciliation?

Our place on the timeline of today is nothing new. I'm certainly not making light of our moral crises in the United States, nor of the turmoil on the world stage. Here's what's worth considering: the God of history does not slumber, nor does He sleep. He has seen fierce little kingdoms come and go, and has seen grand civilizations like ancient Rome swallowed up like a solitary drop of water in hot sands.

There is a day coming when all of history will be rolled up like a rotten papyrus scroll and God will bring a climatic close to this world. Until such time, though, we can hope. Not a misplaced hope in a government or a greenback, but a hope sustained by the Word of God. The tomb is empty and the throne is occupied, and because of that I look at 2005 with the confidence that God is God, and what He does is always right.

May God bless you and yours in 2005, and feel free to revel in the security that comes from knowing Jesus intimately.



# Dollar drop puts pinch on missions funds

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Reaching this year's \$150 million Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal certainly will help Southern Baptist missionaries reach out to the lost — and deal with the weakening American dollar.

David Steverson, chief financial officer of the International Mission Board (IMB) in Richmond, Va., acknowledged the drop in the dollar has led to budget shifts and decreased buying power on numerous mission fields.

One of the most significant factors impacting the IMB's budget is "the weak dollar around the world," Steverson stated. "We have actually been dealing with the weak dollar for a couple of years now, and it is only getting worse."

"If we were to receive the entire \$150 million budgeted for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, it would go a long way toward helping with this problem," Steverson said.

To illustrate the situation, Steverson said at the beginning of 2003 he was invited to participate in a meeting in Greece with IMB personnel in Central and Eastern Europe.

He accepted the invitation in January and the meeting was to be held in June. In January 2003, the exchange rate was 1 euro for 88 cents U.S. By the time he arrived in Greece, it cost about \$1.15 to buy a euro. According to the Associated Press as of late Monday, Dec. 13, the euro

stood at \$1.3297 after reaching record highs against the dollar, of more than \$1.34, during the previous week.

The dollar also has reached record lows against the Japanese yen. As of late Monday, the dollar was at \$105.38 yen, recovering 3 percent from the previous week.

In addition to the IMB, the impact also is being felt by the Canadian Convention of Southern Baptists, which recently trimmed

20 percent of its budget to deal with the drop in the U.S. dollar's value. About 80 percent of the CCSB budget comes from American entities, churches and individuals.

Among IMB workers, the declining dollar has had the most impact on their operating budgets. Currently, the IMB has \$128 million budgeted overall for operating needs and \$22 for capital needs, mostly missionary housing and vehicles.

Steverson said each region's operating budget is fixed in dollar terms and missionaries must adjust spending based on the dollar's value.

"They don't get more dollars," Steverson said, "they just have to do less."

With the weakness of the dollar, he said the IMB could very well divert some of the \$22 million budgeted for capital needs to operating budgets. The IMB had to take similar action following the \$136,214,648 Lottie Moon

Christmas Offering for 2003 when it diverted about \$2 million to operating budgets in the 11 IMB regions.

Steverson said he did not know of any overall programs that have been eliminated by missionaries' decreased buying power on the field, but some activities have been curtailed significantly.

While most of the IMB's capital expenses go toward missionary housing and vehicles, the mission board does buy some other capital items — anything that lasts more than three years or so — such as computers, copiers, printing presses and medical equipment.

"When you have to cut back as we have in the past couple of years, you simply don't replace the vehicle or computer or copy machine as often as you might like to," Steverson said.

Up to 70% of missionaries' salaries are protected by the IMB's field parity supplement. The field parity supplement is designed so that each missionary around the world has about the same buying power as their IMB missionary colleagues regardless of where they serve.

To determine the field parity supplement, the IMB uses an agent who prices about 170 goods and services twice a year, Steverson said. The items are weighted according to how often consumers would actually purchase them, so that food items are given a larger weighting than appliances since people consume food every day and only buy an appliance occasionally.

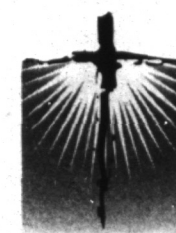
From that information, the IMB develops an index adjusted for the various currencies around the world. While pricing is done twice a year, currency changes are updated several times a year.

However, Steverson said changes in the field parity supplement are based on how much prices have gone up in an individual missionary's location compared to other locations around the world. He said 70 percent of missionaries' pay is protected under the field parity supplement because studies indicate that on average, over a career, that

is what the missionary spends on the field.

Steverson said the IMB overspent its field parity supplement budget by about \$1.6 million last year and could overspend it by about two million dollars this year, based on currency and inflation changes.

In Canada, where the Canadian Convention of Southern Baptists (CCSB) also is feeling financial pressure from the declining U.S. dollar, the Canadian dollar — or "loonie" as the one dollar coin is called, with a picture of a loon engraved on the reverse side — reached a record low of slightly less than 62 cents U.S. in January 2002. Late last month, the Canadian dollar had reached a 12-year high of more



MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS

THE  
SECOND  
FRONT PAGE

*Record*

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## Canadians fighting on

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — The political odds may be stacked against them, but opponents of same-sex marriage in Canada aren't giving up without a fight. While the Liberal federal government announced Dec. 9 that a gay marriage bill would be debated in January, politicians throughout the country who oppose the bill have begun plotting strategy. The movement has seen even members of the Liberal Party — the party that is pushing for the re-definition of marriage — speak out against the bill. Prime Minister Paul Martin is a Liberal. "I'm one of several very active MPs (Members of Parliament) trying to convince MPs to vote against it," Liberal MP Patrick O'Brien told *The Hill Times*. "There's no formal organization, but there are two or three of us who are pretty vigorously trying to convince members who are undecided and we are continuing to do that. At the moment, we have a bit of an uphill fight but we aren't giving up and we are going to wage that fight and I think the side who wants this to pass might be a little overconfident." Hoping to temper opposition within his party, Liberal Justice Minister Irwin Cotler said Dec. 13 that civic officials who oppose same-sex "marriage" would not be forced to perform such ceremonies. It had already been expected that religious officials would be protected within the bill. Cotler's position likely means that, if the bill passes, some rural communities won't see same-sex marriages performed — simply because every official there will oppose them. The bill needs 155 votes to pass in the 308-seat Parliament, and the vote will be mostly a free vote — meaning that MPs will be allowed to vote their conscience and will not be asked to follow the party line. The exception to that are members of Martin's Liberal cabinet — all 39 of whom will be required to vote for it. The remaining 95 Liberals likely will decide the bill's fate.

## Looking back

### 10 years ago

While baptism statistics in the Southern Baptist Convention have been on a roller coaster ride since 1972, baptisms among teenagers take the greatest plunge. A lack of adult volunteers leads the list of reasons for the decline.

### 20 years ago

Jimmy Allen, president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, is on hand as Lauderdale Association, Meridian, becomes the first in the Southern Baptist Convention to provide local programming over the ACTS network.

### 50 years ago

The Home Mission Board confirms appointments and makes appropriations for the salaries of 1,074 regular missionaries and 370 student summer workers — an increase of 48 over 1954.



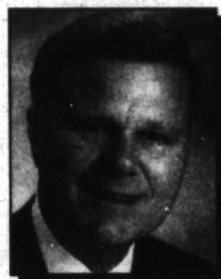
## SEARCHING FOR JESUS

More and more, Christmas seems to be less and less about the coming of the Son of God. Every year there seems to be a new way that some anti-Christian group or anti-Jesus organization tries to erase a part of the Christ in Christmas. This year I read where the ACLU was trying to stop school kids from singing about Rudolph, the Red-nosed Reindeer. I thought how absurd. I never ever associated Rudolph with being some kind of Christian carol or Christ-honoring anthem. In one of the lines of the song it says, "Then one foggy Christmas Eve Santa came to say, Rudolph with your nose so bright want you guide my sleigh tonight?" The reference to Christmas Eve irritated the ACLU. I suppose their ultimate goal is to have a winter holiday, an end of the year vacation time, a feel-good give your friends gifts, pre-New Year's holiday but not anything associated with the God of heaven loving the needy folks on earth.

On the other hand, even though there are lights and sounds and trees and glitter, it is often hard to find Jesus in it all. The thought occurred to me that little if anything has changed from the first Christmas. Not everyone found Him then. In fact, not everyone even looked for Him.

As you think about Christmas, consider the difficulties in finding Jesus. For the wise men and even for those shepherds nearby on the hillside there were difficulties to overcome in order to find Jesus. It is not that Jesus did not want to be found or that God did not want everybody to know that He had come, but so many times folks are not willing to overcome the difficulties that may stand in the way. Think about the time, the terrain, and the trouble they had to overcome in order to see this marvel that God had brought into their midst.

Some seem to be further away from God



## Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

than others but regardless of where you are, there are often things that stand in the way and make it difficult for you to have an experience with Him. The wise men were scanning the heavens and then they came to Jerusalem and inquired of the Scriptures. They wanted to know, "Where is all of this suppose to take place?" When the shepherds heard from the angelic host directly, each of them in his own way made his way to Christ.

Are there difficulties that you have let stand between you and finding Jesus and His purpose in your life? As you consider Christmas also think about the delights. When they found Jesus, what a blessing they enjoyed! The Bible describes the wise men as having exceeding great joy. Isn't that good? How long has it been since you have had a touch of Jesus' presence that brought to your heart exceeding great joy? They were so filled with joy they started giving. That certainly was a measure of spiritual experience. We all know 2,000 years later the gifts that they brought: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Their gifts were brought and given to the Christ-child out of the joy in their hearts.

Christmas is the kind of season that brings joy. It is not just the gathering of family, the eating of a feast, and the giving of presents. No, when people come to know the Christ there is a joy that has no bounds. It is real in our hearts and it lasts all year long and provides delight day after day though triumphs and tribulations. Have you ever noticed the joy that always seems to accompany giving out of love? It

does not matter if it is financial or physical. I have known several people through the years who have made organ donations to family members or someone they loved. I have been with them before they went to surgery and seen them go through the pain of giving a kidney to be transplanted into a child or a sibling. It is an amazing thing to see that kind of love and experience that kind of joy that people have when they give with such meaning. That is what God has in mind for us to experience. We can give our lives to Him just as He gave to us. What delight!

As you think about Christmas, consider one other feature that is sometimes overlooked. Once the wise men came to Jesus, presented their gifts, and prepared to go home, the Bible says, "They went another way." They didn't go back to Jerusalem and report what they had found, but they went another way. Jesus did then and certainly does now change the directions of lives. He will put you on a different course with a different purpose and far greater blessings than you have ever had before. He will send you on your way another way.

Would you take time to pause and think about the other ways that God may be wanting to lead you? Think about your fellow travelers in life in another way and respond to people, maybe to those who have done you wrong, in another way. Let God touch your attitude and transform your face to help you in this season and in the coming year to travel another way, to walk on the bright side of life, to find the sunshine rays that fill life with meaning, and let God, as only He can do, open new ways for you to sing, serve, and count for Him. If you do, you will have truly experienced Christmas.

The author may be contacted at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. E-mail: jfutral@mbcb.org.

## New Orleans bivo music class open for enrollment

January 17 begins the sixth of seventh courses at seven locations in Mississippi sponsored by New Orleans Seminary.

The eight courses are: (1) Song Leading; (2) Worship Planning; (3) Reading Music: Rhythm/Pitch; (4) Reading Music: Harmony/Melody; (5) Hymnology; (6) Music Administration/Staff Relations; (7) Survey of Music Resources (8) Class Voice.

The eight courses meet two hours per week. Each course is eight weeks in length. The cycle of courses is scheduled over a two-year period. Each course is independent and has no prerequisite. Each stu-

dent who completes the eight courses earns a Church Music Certificate from New Orleans Seminary plus a credit of eight hours toward an on campus degree program.

There is a one-time registration fee of \$25. Cost of each course is \$100. A \$50.00 scholarship is available for first-time students. Students already enrolled are not eligible. The grant is limited to one person per church.

The seventh course "Survey of Music Resources" will meet once a week for two hours for eight consecutive weeks at the following locations and times:

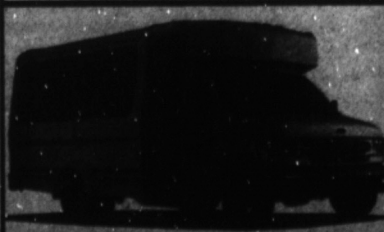
- **Broadmoor Church, Madison** — beginning January 17 (7-9 p.m.) Jimmy McCaleb, teacher, (601) 924-1233.
- **Handsboro Church, Gulfport** — beginning January 17 (6:30-8:30 p.m.) Louis White, teacher, (228) 896-3796.
- **First Church, Booneville** — beginning January 17 (7-9 p.m.) LuAnne Ford, teacher, (662) 728-6272.
- **Northcrest Church,**

- Meridian** — beginning January 17 (6:30-8:30 p.m.) Buddy McElroy, teacher, (601) 681-6615, (601) 679-1887.
- **Hernando Church, Hernando** — beginning January 17 (7-9 p.m.) Barry Tweedy, teacher, (662) 429-6361.
- **Tri-County Association Building, Columbia** — beginning January 18 (6:30-8:30 p.m.) Kenny Adams, teacher, (601) 876-3436.

- **Clarksdale Church, Clarksdale** — beginning January 17 (7-9 p.m.) Hugh Plunkett, teacher, (662) 624-2538.
- For more information, contact Jimmy McCaleb, Church Music Department, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3273 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 273. E-mail: jmccaleb@mbcb.org.

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#### SERIOUS CONCERNS

- How much financial liability can your church bear?
- Insurance rates are going up!
- Legal Advisors are saying, "Remove the last row of seats!"
- Some states have already but mandatory replacement deadlines in action!
- Charitable Organizations and Child Transportation Businesses are at Risk!



Our Father  
which art  
in heaven,  
hallowed be  
thy name. Thy  
kingdom come.  
Thy will be  
done in earth,  
as it is in  
heaven.

### Is God's Will Reflected in Your Last Will and Testament?

Nothing brings more comfort, peace and joy to a Christian than to know that we have honored God by providing for our loved ones while advancing the cause of Christ with our material resources. However while many Christians practice week-by-week or monthly stewardship, as many as 8 out of 10 Christians do not have a valid Last Will and Testament.

Since 1943, the Mississippi Baptist Foundation has assisted individuals in the highly specialized area of charitable estate planning. Your stewardship commitment, perhaps your greatest gift, deserves no less. If you want to realize your charitable estate planning goals by drafting a Christian Last Will and Testament, contact the Foundation. Call us at (601) 292-3210.

**MBF**

THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST FOUNDATION

Remember January is Make Your Will Month



## JUST FOR THE RECORD

Trinity Church, Philadelphia, will host its annual New Year's Eve concert on December 31 at 7 p.m. Performances will include The Wells Brothers, Noxapater; Second Mile, Tanya Kilpatrick

and the Trinity Quartet, all from Philadelphia.

Bethesda Church, Terry, will be hosting a celebration honoring pianist Rose Ogletree on January 16 at 10:45 a.m. A cov-

ered dish fellowship will follow. For more information, please call (601) 925-5222 or (601) 878-5352.

The children's department of Grays Creek Church, Hernando, presented Down By the Creek Bank October 31. Pictured are the cast members.

Agricola Church, Agricola, ordained Caleb R. Howell to the ministry at the request of New Life Church, Leaf, November 21. Jerry Rawls is pastor of New Life where Howell serves as youth minister. Tommy Mitchell is pastor of Agricola. Bruce

Hennington presented the charge to the candidate and Rawls presented the charge to the church.

The youth and other members (pictured) of Steele Church, Forest, recently helped prepare and serve meals to Hurricane Ivan victims that took refuge in the Scott County Coliseum.

Rock Hill Church, Mt. Olive, recently awarded perfect attendance certificates for the 2003-04 year. Pictured (from left) are Linda Hall, Lily Hall, Billy Hall, and Peggy Parish. Marcus Burnham is pastor.



Smith & Wright

West End Church, West Point, honored Jesse Harmon and Jimmie Pruett for serving as deacons for over 57 years. Both were ordained the same day in February 1947. They were presented with plaques. Lunch followed the morning service.

Woodland Church, Pontotoc, held a deacon ordination in October. Pictured (from left) are Mike Weaver, pastor, Chris Mooreman, Randy Stegall, Rick Hardin, and Everette Taylor.

Dean Wright, Tunica, was ordained to the ministry October 2 by Calvary Church, Parchman. Jim Phillips, Joe Young, Jim Harmon, and Danny Smith participated. Wright is the northwest area director of FCA in Mississippi. Following the ordination, Wright and Smith roller-skated with the church youth.

Children completing the new Christian class at Rock Hill Church, Mt. Olive, are: Ben Pierce, Olivia Hall, Tyler Sanford, Cole Sanford, and Reid McRaney.



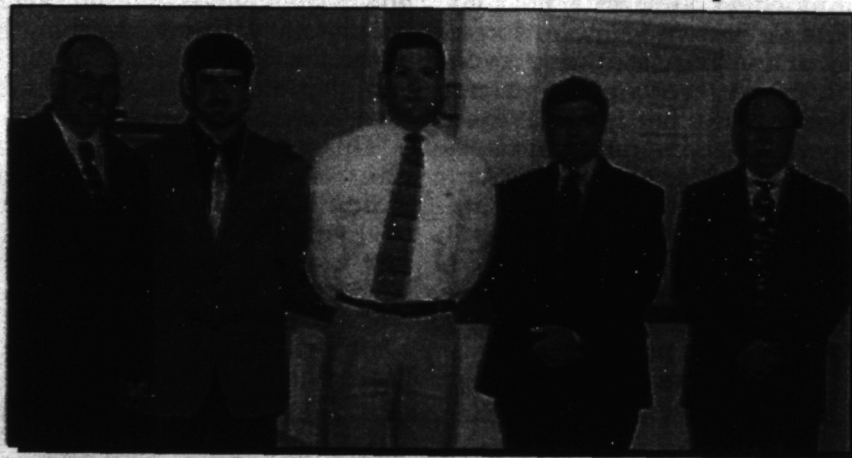
Caleb Howell Ministry Ordination



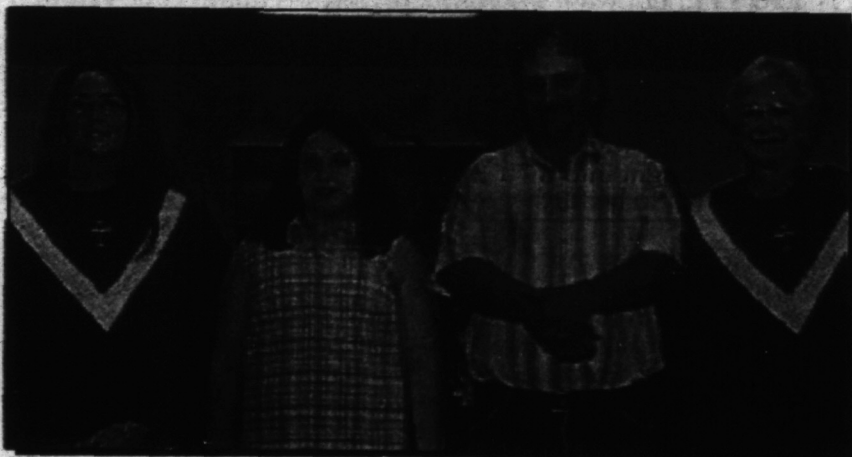
Children's Choir of Gray's Creek Church, Hernando



Youth of Steele Church, Forest



Weaver, pastor; Mooreman, Stegall, Hardin, and Taylor



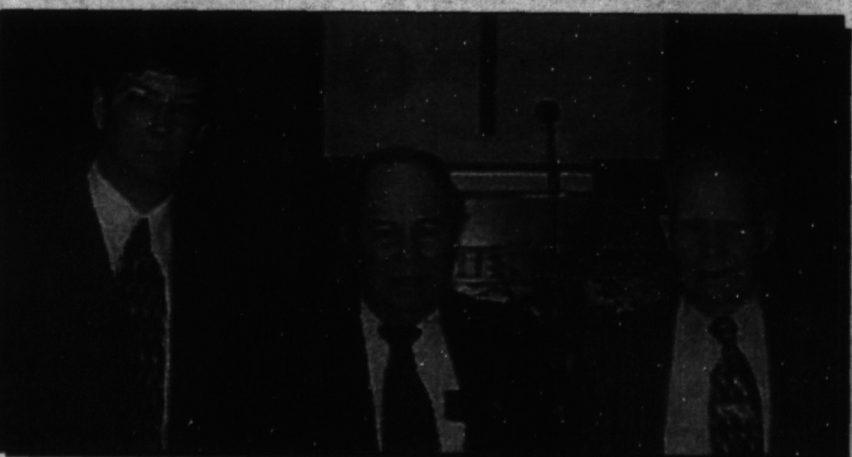
Linda Hall, Lily Hall, Billy Hall, and Peggy Parish



Ben Pierce, Olivia Hall, Tyler Sanford, and Cole Sanford

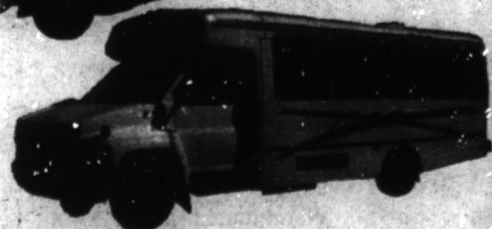
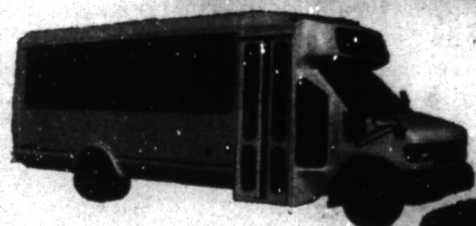


Reid McRaney



Mike Mathena, Jesse Harmon, and Jimmie Pruett

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**IS MUSIC YOUR MINISTRY?** Do you have a heart for youth? Immanuel Baptist Church, Vicksburg, Miss., is accepting resumes for minister of music/youth/education. Send to personnel committee chairman, Immanuel Baptist Church, 6949 Hwy 61 South, Vicksburg, MS 39180.



## FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

### Announce Jesus, the Source for New Life

John 4:7-10, 13-15, 28-30, 35-36, 39-42

By Frances C. Graham

If you had lived in Samaria in 28 A.D., you would have been surprised that Jesus and His disciples would even travel through the area. For you see, Jews chose to avoid this country because they thought Samaritans had betrayed their faith by marrying foreigners from the Northern Kingdom following the conquest by Assyria. The Jews were also fearful of the Samaritans because of the enmity that existed between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

For reasons unknown to man, Jesus saw the need to travel this way on His way to Galilee from Jerusalem. He along with His disciples stopped at what was and is known today as Jacob's well, located near the Samaritan

village of Sychar.

Upon arrival at the well, Jesus sent His disciples into the nearby village. While He rested at the well, a lone Samaritan woman came to draw water.

Jesus met and spoke to the woman breaking three major social rules of the time: First, women were considered to be inferior to men; in public no Middle Eastern man ever spoke to a woman, (including even his wife, mother or sister.) Second, no Jew would ever speak to a Samaritan nor use a vessel handled by a Samaritan because they would then be ceremonially unclean. Third, no self respecting man would ever speak to a woman of such a reputation as she was a well-known social outcast.

When Jesus offered living



Graham

water, it confused the woman since she understood nothing concerning spiritual water. The gift of God is living water, the water of life. (4:10) Jesus continues to describe the living water as water that quenches all thirst. (4:13) He further states that it will spring up or bubble

up inside the person into everlasting life. (4:14)

The woman was taken back by the description but decided that she would request it so that she would never thirst again, nor have to come to Jacob's well to draw water. (4:15) Now her understanding was quite limited, but she did know the teachings of the Jews concerning worship and that the Messiah was to come someday.

This woman came to recognize her sins and want instead a life filled with God-implanted living water. She was the first example in the Gospel to be born again. She met Jesus who filled her with a desire for a life of which she had never heard of nor dreamed of before.

Based on Jesus Christ's words, the woman believed on Him and immediately began to witness for Him back in the village from whence she came. In fact, she was on a mission to tell others of the revelation that He made to her concerning both her life and what He could do for her. On the basis of Jesus' omniscience, she raised the question of whether the Messiah had come. (4:28-29)

When the disciples returned to Jesus, they were surprised but carefully held it to themselves. The disciples showed great compassion for their teacher, Jesus, but they really did not understand evangelizing to the entire town. They were concerned with earthly matters rather than spiritual matters. Jesus tells them the fields are ready for harvest, not later but now. (4:30-31, 34-38)

Many Samaritans came to the well to find Jesus. They asked Him to stay and teach them and so He did for two more days. Upon His leaving, many more believed that He was the Savior of the world. They went a step fur-

ther and announced it to others as well. (4:39-42)

At the beginning, a statement was made that if you lived in 28 A.D., you would be surprised that Jesus even chose to go through Samaria. Now do you think Jesus is surprised at how often we do not take the opportunity to reach out to the "Samaritans" in our lives? Do you focus on the earthly things rather than on spiritual matters? Do you have the gift of God — that of living water? Has it welled up inside of you? Have you ever told others of this gift? How often? Have you looked around in your home, your neighborhood, or your town to see what fields are ready for the harvest?

We, those who are saved by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, pass up many opportunities to announce our testimony to others. The time is here. The fields are ready for the harvest. It is time for us to do our part in both sowing and reaping.

Graham is a member of Adaton Church, Starkville.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### Handling Money

Luke 16:1-13

By Neil Gant

The Bible is full of passages readily understood. We thrill to read such great truth as found in simple texts like John 3:16. Other sections of Scripture do not fall into such a category. The lesson text is one of those. The passage before us is a hard one. There are knots in it which will never be untied until the Lord Jesus returns. Even so, it behooves us to turn our attention to the most difficult of texts because of their inclusion in the Word of God.

CONSIDER THE FUTURE, LUKE 16:1-4

This parable is about a steward who wasted his master's wealth. He was in charge of managing the household and neglected that duty and mis-

managed the master's holdings. When this was discovered, the master called him and promptly fired him. The man was dishonest with his master. He lied about what was happening with the household assets. Sin always catches up with us. A person cannot practice evil deeds and not pay a price. David is a prime example of sin's high price. I saw a story once of a woman who had it all. She owned a lucrative fashion business, had a million-dollar salary, a husband, three sons, and a drug habit. She wound up sleeping in the subway fire escape because of her habit. She lost everything. Sin will be found out. Your only escape is repentance. Not just an attitude of being sorry about being caught,



Gant

but true repentance because you violated the standards of the Word of God. Now let us go back to the story. This man is now up a creek without a paddle. He immediately knows what he cannot do for himself. He is not strong enough to dig and he will not beg. An idea strikes him like a bolt of lightning. He works out a plan so that he can have a place to live and a way to get help from others. He was right to consider the future but he was wrong to do so in an immoral manner.

MAKE WISE DECISIONS, LUKE 16:5-9

The steward calls on the people who owe his master. He changed their accounts. He wrote off one account by fifty percent. He was scratching their backs and soon he would ask a favor in return (16:4). The master was impressed and commended the steward. This man schemed and planned and

carried out his plans. He was wicked but he had an eye for the future. He was not commended for his unjust actions, but rather for acting wisely. He was praised for looking ahead, not for being crooked. The point is that even those in this world make better preparation than those who are in the kingdom. Jesus is asserting that we ought to use money, something often associated with evil (mammon of unrighteousness), in a wise manner. When believers use money wisely they make friends by giving to worthy causes and needy people. The wise use of money on the earth will store up for believers treasure in heaven.

USE MONEY FAITHFULLY, LUKE 16:10-12

A person's conduct in little things is a clear test of what he or she will do with big things. Obviously, Jesus did not approve of dishonesty or unfaithfulness. We often let the material possessions over which we have been placed as

stewards to become more important than our families, our churches, and even our walk with the Lord. If we have not been trustworthy will material wealth, how can we be entrusted with true heavenly riches? Money and material possessions are not peculiarly evil. Money is unrighteous when it becomes the love of our lives. We are to never allow money to rule us. We are to use money in ways that show we are faithful to the Lord.

USE MONEY BUT WORSHIP GOD, LUKE 16:13

Money cannot be our master. No person can serve two masters. Jesus plainly said you cannot serve God and money. The common notion of the day was that riches were a mark of divine blessing. Rich people were thought of as God's favorites. The Lord Jesus did not condemn wealth. He rather condemned the love of and devotion to wealth or material possessions.

Gant is pastor of Pleasant Grove Church, Gore Springs.

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## FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

### Practice Integrity

Titus 2:1, 11-3:8

By Frances C. Graham

As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, one's life is to reflect Jesus in every way. You have heard it said before that you as a Christian may be the only Bible that some people will ever see. In other words, the saving truth of the gospel message will fall on deaf ears when those proclaiming it live ungodly lives that show no evidence of redemption. When Christians live in open sin, one can hardly expect anyone to heed the message that purports to save men from sin. We must remember that compelling testimonies are from those of a righteous, holy, self-giving life.

Integrity comes from God through His saving grace which brings salvation to all who will come and partake. One does not have to hold a political office, be

a person of great wealth, or have any other criteria that must be obtained to meet the Savior face to face. You must be willing to accept the gospel, believe the gospel and live the gospel and by this means you will receive the grace of God to teach others by example what a life of integrity is.

Finding the word "integrity" in Webster's New World Dictionary, we discover defining words such as wholeness, unbroken condition, perfect condition, soundness, and being of sound moral principle, uprightness, honesty, and sincerity. These words have a very deep meaning for every reader of this article because they are characteristics that are all obtainable through God.

As a believer, one should acknowledge God for His being



Graham

and perfection. We are to love and trust Him, depend on Him, devote ourselves to Him, pray to Him, praise Him and meditate on His Word and works. If we do these things we will have a life based not on a list of negatives but a life based on wholeness in the Lord.

Living a life of integrity in Christ also enhances relationships with others. We are to live under the laws of our government (3:1), and be ready to do every good work (3:1) constantly not just when it is convenient for us. We are to speak no evil of our neighbor (3:2). In fact, it is better to say nothing than to say something evil about another.

We are not to fight nor cause a fight. We are to be gentle and just, not looking for a problem of contention or strife (3:2). We are not to assume the words we hear or actions we see in the worst sense. We are to show meekness of spirit to all men. We cannot just have

meekness in our hearts but we must show it in our speech and conduct (3:2).

We also must recognize that we have previously lived the life of malice, deceit, disobedience, hatefulness, foolishness and captives to various passions (3:3). We have been delivered out of that miserable state by no strength of our own but by God's son Jesus. We have been saved by His mercy not by our works. We have been saved by the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit (3:4-5).

He has justified the sinner by His grace and when you are saved you have the eternal hope of everlasting life and becoming heirs with Christ (3:5-6).

Much is written about works and many people speak of works, but works without faith is dead. If one has faith in God, then a natural out pouring of works should occur. A Christian must have an operative working faith.

Now let us do some self examination. Was there a point as you were reading this

that you were uncomfortable? Do you practice meekness not just in your heart but outwardly in your speech and conduct as well? Do you ever say something before you have "tasted" how those words will be received? Are you one who looks for a way to misinterpret what another individual says? What have you done lately to demonstrate your love for our Lord? Who have you reached out to lately?

This last question comes at a good time since Christmas seems to soften our hearts for giving to others. You can probably name individuals that you reached out to recently. The point is not what you do at a particular time of year, but instead what you do year round. We are to follow the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5:16 "...let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

Graham is a member of Adaton Church, Starkville.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### What About the Kingdom?

Luke 17:20-37

By Neil Gant

Chaos, confusion, disorder, and violence seem to be the rule of the day. It looks as if the world is on a downward spiral to destruction and God has either ignored the problem or is powerless to do anything about it. Such a situation may prompt someone to say — Where is God? Is He unable to hear our cries? Is He blind and cannot look on our misery? Is He weak and powerless to help us? How can God be God and such wickedness prevail around us?

There is another kingdom that cannot be seen with the human eye and cannot be governed by human efforts. The other kingdom is the Kingdom of God. When it appears that God is not in charge because of the turmoil of this world, we must

remember that His kingdom still stands. Evil will not prevail. Since the Fall when man gave in to the allurements of sin and fell into bondage to the world, the flesh, and the devil, evil has been running wild. However, the day will come when all evil will be subdued by the Son of God. In the meantime the kingdom is growing and expanding. It may not be visible. There may not be great outward manifestations of its expanse. The kingdom is still growing. People are being saved. Lives are being changed.

**PRESENT NOW, LUKE 17:20-21**

The Pharisees inquired about the kingdom of God. Jesus told them that the kingdom does not come with observation. The kingdom

does not come with ceremony and splendor. Many in Jesus' day looked for a Messiah who would overthrow Rome and establish a kingdom. They were looking for it to come with much outward show. If that were the case then people would be

greeting the kingdom with shouts of "Here it is!" or "There it is!" The kingdom of God has a different nature. It is within. The reign or rule of God is spiritual in nature. Wherever a person recognizes God's rule in his or her own heart, the kingdom is present. The kingdom of God consists of inner qualities (the fruit of the Spirit).

**NOT YET, LUKE 17:22-25**

While it is true that the kingdom is present, it is also true that it has a future aspect. We are caught in the tension between the already and the not yet. The Bible does not give a specific time frame for the Second Coming.

Scripture never reveals specific dates. Jesus indicates that His coming will have a suddenness to it. Such a concept should lead us to be continually prepared. We need to live so that we will not bring shame to His Name if He were to suddenly appear. His Second Coming is linked to His first. He was appointed to suffer and die. This was no accident. He died according to a divine plan. He must suffer first before He would return in glory. The people of the day could not imagine a Messiah destined to suffer. They could easily picture One coming to rule, but not suffer. Jesus came in person to suffer. Jesus will come again in person as sovereign. In our experience we stand between these two truths. From this section of lesson, we can note two important aspects. Jesus will come suddenly and Jesus will come personally.

**NOT EXPECTED, LUKE 17:26-29**

The people of Noah's time ignored his warnings of coming judgment. They went

about living their normal lives. Never in a 120 years would they dream that a flood would come and be the instrument of God's judgment. The people in Sodom ignored Lot. They were so absorbed by their lives they ignored the sudden judgment that came on them. The same is true in our time. People ignore the Word of God and reject the message of the Gospel. He will come again just as He said.

**COMPLETED AT LAST, LUKE 17:30-37**

The Kingdom of God will be seen in its fullness when Jesus returns. The fulfillment of the Kingdom is certain and people need to enter now and escape judgment. The powerful picture of this need is found in the words, "Remember Lot's wife." She longed to stay in Sodom. Many speak of affiliation with the church and have no affection for Jesus. Those are the people who will be left behind to face the judgment of God.

Gant is pastor of Pleasant Grove Church, Gore Springs.

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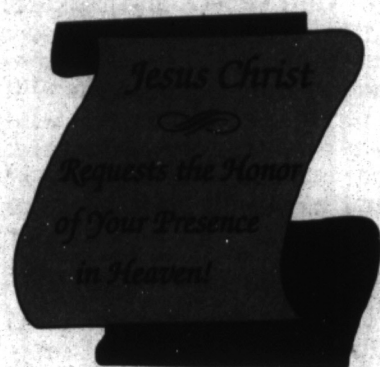
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4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

### Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx, 1932 - 2004  
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FYB WEODD LUFYBEBFY,

FYB ZSCLBE ZOJBFY: TGF

FYB LCEJ CZ CGE WCJ

DYOSS DFOAJ ZCE BMBE.

UDOUOY FYUEFN-AUAB:  
BUWYF

Clue: L = W

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle:

Mark 4:11

# Despite setbacks, Gospel advancing in Iraq

BAGHDAD (BP) — Last weekend, 68 Iraqis were killed and three more American servicemen lost their lives. I photographed oil wells set ablaze by the insurgents and watched a car bomb explode from my hotel. Yet in the midst of the turmoil and violence, the church of Jesus Christ is vibrant and alive. The Gospel is being proclaimed and new believers are following the Messiah, gathering for fellowship and discipleship across this land.

American foreign policy and military might have opened an opportunity for the Gospel. God is moving here, and Southern Baptists are responding.

It is a difficult and dangerous time for our world, and the future cannot be clearly seen. Each worker must live in the present, carrying his or her past into a future that cannot be known. What may be an acceptable level of risk today might shatter tomorrow — or five years from now — in events that might have implications not only for them, but for those they walk among.

It is not all that unusual a situation. More than 40% of the nearly 5,400 Southern Baptist international missionaries who serve across the globe live and minister in uncertain circumstances.

Here in this biblical land, the dust of time is everywhere. It swirls about you. Babylon,

Ninevah and Ur are ruins, little more than toppled stone and fragments, historical memory. But Medes and Persians, Assyrians and Chaldeans are more than ancient words from an old book. They are very much alive. They are words people use to introduce themselves. It is who they are, their heritage. To walk among them is to walk among living history.

Out of this cultural mix came Abraham, framing his relationship with God, fathering a nation and the lineage of Christ, which is our heritage, too. To be here is to walk through our history, to walk on hallowed ground.

This is a land of violence, but it is also a land of hospitality. At the end of a long drive across country, I spent the night in a home. My driver and I had entertained each other by pointing at things as we rode along, asking, "What is this called, what's that called?" learning words in our respective languages, laughing as we stumbled through them. At dusk we pulled into a town nestled against spectacular mountains. "My brother lives here," my new friend said. "No hotel. Stay with him." To refuse was unthinkable.

Hot tea, a pallet on the floor, a warm blanket. A cold rinse in the courtyard the next morning was followed by pecans for breakfast. We



**FLAMES OF FELLOWSHIP** — People are coming to Christ across Iraq. They often say they are sick of religion. What they crave is a relationship with God, and they find that in Jesus. In a land known for tensions between ethnic groups, Christians gathering for prayer reflect the diversity of Iraq. They include Iraqi Arabs, Kurds, Persians, Assyrians, and Chaldeans. (BP photo)

broke the pods with the point of a knife, then wrapped the meat in pieces of the flat bread that is so much a staple in this part of the world.

Ish is one of the Arabic words for bread. It also means life. In breaking that bread, the phrase, Bread of Life, and doing it in remembrance of Him, took on new meaning.

There is so much we need to do in remembrance of Him. A

little child, born into an age of uncertainty and violence not unlike our own, would grow to offer the ultimate act of hospitality. Along the way, He would remind us that beyond loving God we are to be a people of hospitality. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves.

*Editor's note: For security reasons, the author of this article is not identified.*

## LifeWay employees increase missions presence

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Kristin Parks, a retail accounting specialist at LifeWay Christian Resources, usually crunches numbers eight hours a day, five days a week. For two weeks in November, Parks laid aside her calculator and picked up her Bible to share the Gospel in remote villages in Niger, Africa.

"It was incredible to see how God used our team to plant, sow, water and sometimes reap the harvest," said Parks, a first-time LifeWay mission volunteer. "The best part about going on a trip is being on mission with God."

Parks was one of 145 LifeWay Christian Resources volunteers who ministered internationally in 2004, bringing the total number of volunteers to 651 since 1997. LifeWay, based in Nashville, offers opportunities for employees to participate in international missions and also provides paid leave for two weeks, plus half the cost for corporate-sponsored mission trips.

LifeWay volunteer mission trips included journeys as far away as India and as close as New York City. LifeWay's mission efforts helped lead 7,371 individuals to Christ. The total number of professions of faith stands at 56,014 since LifeWay's first mission trip seven years ago.

Since the inception of the mission program, LifeWay employees and others have contributed \$156,162.25 to corporate-sponsored mission trips to help cover expenses

like Bibles, roofs for new international churches, and bicycles for pastors. The money also helped cover the cost of building two Bible schools in Africa which provide on-site training to local pastors from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, and the Sudan.

Through employee trip participation and donated funds, more than 23 international churches were planted this year, bringing the total to 166.

"I never imagined myself

being involved in mission trips prior to my involvement in my first trip to Kenya in 1999," said Jim Shamblyn, LifeWay's manager of applications system engineering. Since his first trip, Shamblyn has participated in at least one international mission trip each year and recently led a team of nine LifeWay volunteers to Niger.

The opportunity for international ministry is a key benefit to working at LifeWay, Shamblyn said. "This program helps employees grow spiritu-

ally, and LifeWay has better employees as a result of their mission experiences. It's a benefit you can't get anywhere else."

Jim Carter, LifeWay's vice president of finance and business services, said the mission trips have had tremendous impact on the lives of employees and employees' local churches. "If you see that you are doing exactly what God has asked you to do, 'go and telling,' He will bless that in an incredible way," Carter said.

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